the distinctiveness of the work of the era. The depiction of actual life is very marked in such kinds of objects as were becoming emancipated from religious influences, notably funerary earthenware figures. From them, so full of expression and of pulsing action, it is possible to reproduce much of the customs and the dress of the period. Bronzes continued to be produced, among them, as under the Han, decorated mirrors. The traditional popularity of jade persisted, and many were the forms in which this semi-precious stone was painstakingly carved. Painting flourished, with religious (chiefly Buddhist and Taoist) and secular subjects. He who is sometimes regarded as the greatest Chinese painter of all time, Wu Tao Tzu, belongs, it will be remembered, to the T'ang. Calligraphy probably reached its height. Marked development was made in pottery: glazes were more skillfully used than heretofore, there was an improvement in the forms of vases, and true porcelain first appeared.

Under the Sung sculpture declined, but painting, and especially landscapes, attained new heights. In an earlier chapter we have seen some of the reasons for the emphasis upon this type of painting and have noticed that the landscapes of subsequent periods have never surpassed and have seldom if ever equalled those of the Sung masters. We have also seen that porcelains of fine quality, predominantly with monochrome glazes, were produced in great quantities.

The Yuan dynasty, being that of Mongol conquerors who furthered contacts with aliens, brought a fresh influx of foreign impulses. These are especially seen in a reaction from landscapes and in a vivid portrayal of action, notably in the horses which the Mongol riders of the steppes and deserts so

much admired. Persian influences were also present. As was to be expected, however, older forms and schools persisted, for the rule of the Mongols over all China spanned scarcely two generations.

Under the Ming it was secular art in which the greatest achievements were registered. Religious art continued, but the fervor and vigor of both Buddhism and Taoism were declining and inspiration and creative genius were disappearing from the portrayal of religious subjects. Painting remained popular, with landscapes, flowers, birds, animals, and scenes from everyday life among its leading subjects, but while it was often elaborate and painstaking,